

## Constantine

neutrality, only tempered by ardent prayer that his pagan subjects might be brought to a knowledge of the truth? In its entirety he certainly did not, and it was impossible that so zealous a convert should. When the smiles of Imperial favour were withdrawn from the old religion it was inevitable that the Imperial arm which protected it should grow slack in its defence. Yet, throughout his reign Constantine never forgot that the majority of his subjects were still pagan, despite the hosts of conversions which followed his own, and he took care not to press too hardly upon them and not to goad the more fanatical upholders of the old regime to the recklessness of despair. We have seen how the Emperor refused to witness the procession of the Knights in Rome at the time of his Vicennalia. He also forbade his statue or image to be placed in a pagan temple\* But he, nevertheless, retained through life the office of *Pontifex Amaximus*, and as such continued to be supreme head of the pagan religion. Nor was it until the time of Gratian fifty years afterwards that this title—no doubt in deference to the repeated representations of the bishops—was dropped by the Christian Emperors. Some historians have expressed surprise that so enthusiastic a convert to Christianity should have been willing to remain Chief Pontiff; a few have even been genuinely concerned to explain and excuse his conduct. But Constantine was statesman as well as convert. If he had resigned the Chief Pontificate that office might conceivably have passed into dangerous hands. By holding it as an absolute sinecure, by never per-